

Recollections of how different we were during the FDR days and the beginnings of changes

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Reading Dershowitz's "Chutzpah" and in his chapter, "Auschwitz, the Holocaust, Justice and Faith," on seeing his mention of Henry Morgenthau's 1945 book, "Germany Is Our Problem," once again is a reminder, to which I'll come.

First I note that whether or not he is aware of it, in his complaint, with which I agree, over our rebuilding of West Germany and our forgiving and even rewarding Nazis guilty of the most horrible war crimes, this was a very radical change in policy under Truman. Before publication of his book, Morgenthau had developed what was then well known in Washington, a plan for preventing German resurgence as a major industrial and military power and in effect, as the book says, for taking what industry survived as war reparations and leaving it largely an agricultural state. (What also was then well known, if rarely in the press, is that in our bombing of Germany we were quite careful not to bomb major industrial components owned by major U.S. corporations.) Whether or not the Morgenthau plan had full FDR approval, it is consistent with the world FDR hoped would emerge from the war. FDR was not anti-USSR. He recognized it early in his administration, over considerable opposition, and it seemed clear that he intended for us to be their allies after the war, that we live at peace with them. Truman immediately instituted the Cold War, and this radical change in policy Dershowitz, at least to the point I've reached, does not refer to it as the radical change from FDR's policies and hopes that it was.

The mention of Morgenthau reminds me that I was the innocent cause of great personal embarrassment to him in what should not have been embarrassing to him in any way.

After what amounted to a pogrom at Click, which had Jewish (Annenberg) ownership and was actually the result of enormous pressure from the America First banks that controlled Annenberg's debt, I worked for several small magazines. *(True tip Click editor Jewish.)*

Ordinarily the series of Nazi cartel exposes I did for Click would have been loved by ownership. They were entirely consistent with national policy and they did expose serious and dangerous wrongs that the government was actually prosecuting. While I cannot and do not allege a cause-effect relationship between my exposes and government action in taking Nazi-front corporations over, in several instances official action followed my exposes. The most important one I recall is probably of Rohm & Haas, subsidiary "Resinous Products, makers of plexiglas, used on airplanes extensively. *(Haver praised this one.)*

Moe Annenberg was then in jail. His publications were run by his son Walter, later the close buddy of presidents. Moe really introduced gangsterism to Chicago in newspaper circulation wars. His major (later) publication was The Philadelphia Inquirer. Through Triangle Publications he owned the magazines and some radio stations. The changes in Click forced on Walter when it was the third largest picture magazine and profitable without an advertising staff, led to its failure, within a very short time.

While Click's Washington correspondent I instituted a monthly article under the

general title, "Your Government Reports." These articles that to the best of my present recollection I did not ghost, took war and war-preparations information to the people. They were popular in the government and to the readers. (In those days I did a fair amount of ghosting, including of speeches praising my articles for Members of the House to place in the Congressional Record! Adolph Sabath, a fine old wealthy Jewish refugee from Czechoslovakia who'd become very successful in Chicago, was then chairman of the powerful Rules committee, like the speeches I ghosted for him he wanted to have me join his staff.)

After Click I carried the same idea forward on the smaller magazines for which I worked.

Charles "Chick" Schwartz was the Treasury information officer. We had a friendly relationship. (As I now recall a then well-known writer was his cousin, Milton Mayer.) It may be that I'd proposed an article under Morgenthau's name to Chick before leaving Click. Whether or not I did, he ghosted a good piece for one of these smaller magazines.

It happens that in common with most other picture-oriented publications this magazine went for cheesecake pictures. It also happens that for his own political reasons FDR had appointed as Postmaster General a reactionary under far-right Catholic influence and active in what was called or if not is described by "The Legion of Decency." It took strong exception to pictures of women ^{even} wearing more than ^{thin} ~~is~~ worn at beaches. It even took strong exception to pictures of women in what today would be regarded as modest shorts. There was one picture in particular this outfit took strong exception to in the issue that included Morgenthau's article. It was of a ~~man~~ woman wearing shorts and a modest blouse that exposed no torso skin jumping over a fence.

I learned about this ~~from~~ ⁱⁿ an excited phone call from the editor. They had been notified that the magazine was indecent and would be denied access to the mails. Real disaster! And their lawyers could not think of any way to salvage the issue when if it did not get out the magazine would be ruined. Could I help? Do anything to overturn the Post Office ruling?

It was not difficult and I can only wonder what kind of lawyers they had in New York.

The first person with whom I discussed this was Kathryn C. Blackburn ("Casey") who then was either head of the Office of Government Reports or assistant to Lowell Mellett if he had not retired. Casey was and remained a dear friend. Casey was a dear friend, a widow, I think childless, who took delight in the successes of young people and in helping them succeed. She understood propaganda very well, having been on the staff of the World War I Creel commission or committee. She also was a devoted follower of FDR. (Under Truman she did not prosper although she was in the Truman White House. When another good friend of that era, Rabbi Paul Richman, then Washington representative of the N'gai Brith's Anti-Defamation League had no White House connection and needed one urgently, I arranged it through Casey, to the mutual benefit of the ADL and the White House. In those days Paul

used to refer to me as a "one-man ADL." The ADL then was not as prosperous. Its office was in the old Carpenter's Building. It was to Casey, at about 8 a.m. the morning after the attack on Pearl Harbor that I took all my research and notes based on which I had predicted that attack and just about all else the Japanese then did. She and the OGR used it all and in those pre-xeroxing days I got none of it back. Through her I placed a number of friends in useful government employment. Two who later achieved prominence were Mr. Robert Rogers and Sidney Kaufman. Rogers had been editor of Click when I was its Washington correspondent. Sidney had been one of Walter Wanger's top assistants when Wanger was one of Hollywood's top producers. Rogers later took over failing WQQW, then the country's second good-music station, and made a success of it. Among Sidney's many accomplishments was producing the Macbeth that won I think an Emmy for NBC. He also produced an anti-Klan movie in all places, Louisiana! His safety and that of the company was secured by his giving all the leading Klansmen jobs in the production! After World War II he married Andrea, daughter of James P. Warburg. Her father, among other things, grubstaked Land in his polaroid-camera project. When they lived in Forest Hills I had a room on the third floor and stayed there much of the time I was trying to get my first book published. As with many others in those hectic World War II days, these and other friends stayed with me until they could get located, sleeping on a studio couch in the living room of my two-room apartment in the black ghetto then slum, at 323 H St., NW. Rogers was later manager of the National Symphony. It is he who got Kay Shouse to establish Wolf Trap. Andrea's mother was the Broadway star Kay Swift.)

All I had to do was point out to Casey how greatly embarrassing it would be if it got known that the Secretary of the Treasury had written an article for a magazine that was banned by the Postmaster General as indecent and tending to deprave. She saw it right away. I've forgotten all the details but I do have a clear recollection of the person to whom she sent me to get this mess wiped out. It was to Archibald Cox, later of Watergate special counsel fame, who was then in some position of responsibility in the Justice Department. Quite promptly the ban was withdrawn and the magazine got distributed.

I do not remember the details but I had a falling out with that magazine over its refusal to pay me what I regarded as a very nominal fee for what I'd done for it. I'd asked for only a few hundred dollars and they refused.

The mention of that small apartment at 313 H St., NW, brings so much to mind, of the people who stayed there with me, including a Congressman; of those who visited, several other Congressmen and former Members, beaten by the Catholic hierarchy in their districts, where they were New Deal progressives; a variety of union officials whose unions were not wealthy; a friend who later became a famous writer on medical matters and another who did some fine exposes for Max Ascoli's weekly whose name I've forgotten (Douglas Cater was chief of its Washington Bureau- was it The Reporter?) but I'll close with an amusing one.

One of the stories in the series for Click, "Your Government Reports," got off to a bad start, with Francis McAnight, later a State Department tyrant of the extreme right wing

when she headed passports. She was in an information job at one of the war agencies when I took the idea to her. All she wanted to do was redbait all those above her, particularly New Deal and anti-Communist Jews. I remember one was named Strauss. So I had to find someone else and I then did get fine cooperation. My idea was to popularize cotton to women who had so long loved silk.

There were acceptable substitutes, cellulose products, but they then were not as attractive. I'm reminded again!

Lil was one of the two women I remember who in 1936 would not wear silk, particularly not silk stockings. The other was Carol Agger, later Mrs. Abe Fortas. Carol was on the National Labor Relations Board staff and worked with the committee I worked for at the Senate. I'm sure there were other women who wore lisle hose but I have no recollection of it. Carol's legs were rather slim and the lisle looked less attractive on them, perhaps that is why I remember her.

I also remember that one day when ^{Lil}she and I were returning from an early supper to work in my office, then Room 103 in the only Senate Office Building. It was under the stairs we that evening used, the southeast corner, toward the Supreme Court Building. As we entered the then famous liberal Republican, George Norris, father of the Tennessee Valley Authority enacted under FDR, was leaving. His vision had gotten bad. As we walked toward the stairs or elevator and he was walking toward the doorway he stopped us and said more or less in these words, "Young woman, you ought not be wearing silk stockings. That helps the Japanese." He may have made a few comments on the Japanese conduct in China. I do not recall exactly ^{how} Lil replied. But she was wearing lisle.

Another recollection of what was amusing to me. When hylon stockings first became available an amiable but rather backward man, Byron Darby, had the general store in Hyattstown, where Lil grew up and where we later farmed. Once Byron worried aloud to me about his fear that a salesman had talked him into buying a newfangled kind of stocking with which he feared he'd be stuck. He called then "Nee-lon." I tried to tell him they were quite good but he was not easily persuaded. When I offered to buy every pair he had, he was a little less worried. I did, too, and what Lil could not use relatives could and did. And in those days they were quite cheap!

On the cotton story I arranged for a popular young showgirl to be the model. She was the star, I think known as the "Boomsadsie Girl," of the Olson and Johnson show then a big success, Helzapoppin'. It was at The National Theater. She was quite willing to be the model. With or without her or Lil, and I have no recollection of whether or not I had a woman with me, I got a nice selection of women's ^{cotton} undergarments from Kann's Department Store. (I think that old building was found to be historically important and is preserved with some kind of function.) Frank Rhylich, Washington corespondent of the New York Post, was a friend who had a house with a stairway I thought would be fine for pictures, as it was, so with the then well-known photographs, Larry Keightley, send down by Click, we took the

pictures for the story. It must have been after that evening's show or perhaps on a night when there was no show, I do not now recall. I do recall that it was late and this girl and her girl friend in the show, neither much over 20, were tired and lonely. Lil's brother Ed then managed a fine small hotel, the "Benedict, on Eye St. NW. So we drove there, Ed had an empty double room and got someone working in the kitchen, and we had a bite and a few drinks before I drove the girls to where they were staying. I do remember that in the course of conversation they had said how much they missed a good, ^{home} home-cooked meal, although they stayed in and ate in the best hotels. So, I suggested that they come to 343 H St., NW, for supper that night. They ~~liked~~ were very pleased with the invitation.

Only, late as it was, I forget to tell Lil. And come suppertime I was working on what I do not now remember and was a bit late getting home. It seems that these girls had knocked at the door to be greeted by Lil, who did not expect anyone. Only by then she was used to strangers telling her that "Lil invited us."

Lil was always an excellent cook and she never had any failures, not matter how unexpected the guests. And I do recall that those showgirls, stars of that day, were happy with some friendliness and a good, home-cooked meal. Although the surroundings were not up to what they'd grown accustomed to.

Each of the two rooms was about 10 by 10. Nice but small. Good parquets floors, modern in all respects, but cramped. The kitchen was 10 feet wide but in the other dimension only wide enough for either the ~~ref~~ refrigerator or over doors to open. In the passageway from the livingroom into the bedroom, the kitchen between them, we had (and still have) an oak dropleaf table I'd bought unpainted and stained. When three people sat at it one was actually in front of the stove! I think that when we had more than ~~three~~ ^{two guests} I took it into the livingroom.

It was a surprise to me that Broadway stars could be lonely and long for what they had probably left, home cooking. And a little plain friendships with people other than those in the show with them.

Lil had found this apartment for me. It was made when two adjoining houses were made over into apartments. It was very convenient for me. I could walk to my Senate office from it and I could walk home from the Government Printing Office where I often ended the day, not infrequently well into the morning of the next day. It was only about four blocks from the GPO. That then was a mixed block in a black ghetto but after we were married, often as Lil returned late at night and often as she was alone, no trouble and she was not worried.

But in those days most blacks had jobs. Not the best, but jobs. Before mechanization black men could always get work at physical labor.